proximately 26,000 residents, and Hedd, a pearl fishing center, around 10,000. The population exceeded that of the 1941 census by almost 20,000: the increase was confined mainly to the towns of Manama and Muharraq, and was attributed in large part to immigration.

Since the organization of the first government school in 1919, education has made considerable progress, but expansion is handicapped by a shortage of trained teaching personnel. In 1950, the Bahrain government supported 13 primary schools for boys —8 in the towns and 5 in the villages. Educational facilities were made available to girls in 1928, and at present 6 primary schools are in operation. Of the 5,770 pupils registered in government schools in 1950-51, slightly over 1,700 were girls. A few private schools are established in Manama, while Koranic schools are found in most towns and villages. The government also maintains a secondary school, a technical school and a school hostel for boys, and provides scholarships for qualified students for advanced study at the American University of Beirut and in Great Britain. In the recent census, the literacy rate in the indigenous population was estimated at 10 per cent.

Vital Statistics

The registration of births and deaths is not compulsory in Bahrain, and no data for the calculation of vital statistics are obtainable. Local medical authorities agree that the mortality rates in infancy and early childhood are uniformly high. Observations made by the census enumerators in 1950 suggest that the infant mortality is particularly serious in the rural villages, in contrast with the towns, where living conditions have improved within recent years. The maternal mortality rates are correspondingly high.

The size of the population remained practically stationary in the rural districts in the 9-year interval between the first and the second census surveys. The rate of increase in areas outside the towns of Ma-

63:Simmons et al G-5 (1941-1951) 1954
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nama, Muharraq and Hedd and the 3 villages of East and West Rafaa and Sakhir was less than 1 per cent. 161 165 163

Social Economy

Prior to the opening of the Bahrain oil fields, the economy of the islands was based upon pearl fishing and the transshipment of goods between Iran, India and other countries and the neighboring Arabian ports. The waters of the Persian Gulf contain famous pearl fishing banks, and, since ancient times, Bahrain has been recognized as the traditional center of the industry. It constituted the principal source of wealth for centuries, but it reached a low level in the 1920s, due in part to the competition of Japanese cultured pearls in the world markets. Early records are nonexistent, but the former Bahrain pearl fleets probably consisted of 600 to 1,000 vessels. The number has declined progressively: only 83 departed for the banks in 1950. In that year, about 2,000 Bahrainis were engaged in pearl fishing during the season from mid-April to October, undoubtedly a fraction of the total employed when the demand for pearls was at its height. 433 228 489 228

In previous decades, dhow building also was one of the major industries of Bahrain, but its decline has paralleled that of the pearl fisheries. Nine boats were constructed in 1949, as against 100 reported in 1928-29. 396

Today, oil is the foundation of Bahrain's prosperity. The royalties derived from the industry not only have bolstered the declining resources of the government, but have made possible the expansion of public works and social services. Operations are conducted by the Bahrain Petroleum Company, Ltd., which holds long-term concessions from the Sheikh of Bahrain for the development of the petroleum resources of the islands. Oil was discovered in the Jabal ad Dukhan region, near the center of Bahrain Island, in 1932, and production started in 1934. The proven reserves of this field are estimated in the neighborhood of 200 million barrels. The company also operates a 651 653 471 135 600

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